



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Conservation Commission Minutes, May 4, 2006

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

MAY 4, 2006

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the second floor conference room of the Town Hall Annex. Present were William O'Rourke, David White, Catherine Garnett, Chuck Tirone (new associate member) and Timothy Sullivan of the Commission. Judith Hodges and Ellen Reed, of the Commission, were not in attendance. Gerry Smith of Aquatic Control Technology, Inc. and Dr. Peter Braun were in attendance for the Upper Mystic Lake weed control project.

7:30 p.m. - COMMISSION BUSINESS

O'Rourke/White motioned to approve the 4/6 and 4/27 minutes with minor edits; motion passed 3 to 1 with Mr. Sullivan voting to not approve.

Mr. Tirone, also a Town Meeting member, reported on the passage of the Warrant Article that forms a fund for management of the Town's waterbodies. The stormwater Warrant Article was having difficulty being clarified, so this vote has been delayed.

7:45pm - UPPER MYSTIC LAKE, NOTICE OF INTENT for aquatic weed treatment

Dr. Braun recounted the history of this project. There was a drowning, due to the thick weed growth in the early 1960's, before 1969, when Dr. Braun first moved to the house on the Upper Mystic Lake. He and his neighbors pooled their resources and started a program of weed control to make the near shore water safe for swimming. They tried hand harvesting, and then installation of a mat barrier called Aqua-screen. The screen worked for a few years, but subsequently was covered over with new sediment and regrowth occurred. They attempted to pick up the screen and get more use out of it, but this was extremely labor intensive and difficult to find the screen again once it is down. This screen is only appropriate for smaller areas.

In 1993 they began chemical controls, Aquathol-K and Diquat, with intermittent use of algaecide and glyphosate. In some years, no chemicals were used and the weeds came back vigorously. Immediately adjacent to the treatment areas, there are thick stands of water lilies, and the other target species, especially in the water front zone to the town's Conservation land Window on the Mystic. Dr. Braun described this area has having plentiful wildlife (turtles, etc). Mr. Smith reported that there have been no fishkills, or noted impacts to wildlife or other hazardous situations connected to the past year's treatments. Yearly reports are submitted to the Conservation Commission and would continue.

The treatment area is 2.5 to 3 acres, roughly 150 to 200 feet from shore out to the lake and 700 feet along the shoreline. The target species are those that form a thick canopy, effectively shading out other species and therefore leading to declining species diversity and habitat value. The other main objective is to remove bottom rooted, top floating vascular plants that cause a hazard to swimmers by entanglement.

All treatments were performed by Aquatic Control Technology, Inc., who has a DEP license for pesticide applications in waterbodies. There is public notification prior to treatment that includes usage restrictions beyond the state requirements. The intent is to use the lowest effective doses of the herbicides.

This next year, a new formulation of the Aquathol-K, will be used, in granular form in order to control dilution and maximize effectiveness.

Mr. Smith described weed control performed in the two upper bays of the Upper Mystic Lake. The treatment areas cumulatively do not exceed 10% of the total area of the waterbody.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR) is funding a survey of the weeds/plants in this waterbody in order to formulate a management plan.

Mr. Stevens asked about lawn care by the applicants and if they are aware of the need to use low phosphorus fertilizers. Dr. Braun believed that each abutter was aware of this issue.

Ms. Garnett spoke to the need for communication throughout the entire watershed, to be effective. There is a subgroup of the Mystic River Watershed Association, for the Upper Mystic Lake, Friends of the Upper Mystic Lake in Winchester organized by Janice Dolan. This group would be the logical one to contact about distributing information to residents. Other landscape practices should be encouraged, such as, reduction of lawn area and replacement with shrubs and groundcovers along the shoreline, to reduce runoff and to discourage Canada Geese.

Mr. Stevens read comments submitted by Ellen Reed, member of the Commission, who could not attend the meeting. Her concerns included inspections of boats, for weed seeds and plant fragments. She hoped that mechanical means, barriers and aeration systems (like a Solar-bee) would be utilized to provide control of the weeds instead of chemical treatment, of which she was wary and would not vote to approve if she were present.

Mr. Smith spoke to the use of mechanical harvesting of the target species, and in this case, elodea is propagated vegetatively and so plant fragments lead to regeneration and spreading of the stand. The Solar-Bee (a pump aeration raft, powered by a solar panel) is mainly used for algae control, not vascular plant control. The Solar-Bee is soon to be used in Lake Cochicuate in Natick, and the results are anticipated by many as a test case in this region.

White/Sullivan motioned to continue the hearing until 5/18 for receipt of comments from DEP; motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSION BUSINESS (cont.)

Mr. Stevens asked the Commission to comment on an open space question, dealing with town owned lots on Pond St. on the side of the bikepath away from Spy Pond. A few Commissioners wish to visit the lots before commenting.

Ms. Beckwith forwarded information regarding the appeal of the Alewife Path, DEP File No. 91-183. DEP schedules a site walk for May 24, at 9:30am.

Mr. White updated the Commission on the Great Meadows, that someone has dumped yardwaste onto the parcel and dug a large hole. The Lexington Conservation Commission will send letters to the abutters reminding them of regulations regarding activities near wetlands including dumping of yard waster. The Friends group is going to have a hole filling party.

The Town Meeting approved the formation of a new committee to look into the options for more cemetery space. The Conservation Commission has been asked to appoint a representative to that committee. The board discussed a desire to have this be a rotating responsibility.

Mr. Tirone reported that there is already graffiti at the newly opened Spy Pond Park.

The Meadowbrook Park cleanup went well this past Saturday. Mr. O'Rourke, Mr. White and Mr. Sullivan attended and directed the volunteers to cleanup the marsh, Mystic Valley Parkway and to conduct some brush clearing along the pathways. Boy Scout Troup 302, that constructed the path along Mystic Valley Parkway, did the brush clearing work.

Mr. White reported that the self-storage facility on Lowell St. that was to be built near to Mill Brook is now just a rehabilitation project. Consequently, the work in the parking lot and removal of rocks from the Mill Brook has not been done.

Mr. Tirone asked about the background of the 53R Park Ave Conservation parcel.

The Commission voted to convene at approximately 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Corinna Beckwith

Administrator